Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World
By GEN (Retired) Stanley McChrystal with Tantum Collins, David Silverman, and Chris Fussell
NY: Penguin Publishing Group, 2015, 304 pages

Reviewed by MAJ Justin Bakal

To lead an organization in the 21st century, GEN (Retired) Stanley McChrystal argues, requires a change in both mindset and organizational structure. McChrystal and his fellow authors recount the struggles of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in the early stages of the war in Iraq and explain how the task force changed in order to meet those challenges. They sell the point that efficient, complicated organizations that dominated the 20th century are inappropriate for the 21st century.

McChrystal and his co-authors are not the first to assert that organizations must change to meet a new environment. In 1981, organizational theorist Henry Mintzberg explained the effectiveness of implementing an "adhocracy" to deal with complex and unstable environments. Military strategist Edward Luttwak also proposed this in his 1983 essay "Notes on Low Intensity Conflict." The value of McChrystal's perspective is that he built on these theories as a counterinsurgency practitioner. McChrystal and his writing team identify the problem set of a complex environment in the context of JSOC's mission to defeat al Qaida in Iraq (AQI). What he discovered while leading a special mission unit with virtually unlimited resources, was that adaptability is the critical attribute of successful organizations in the new century. Regardless of how efficient JSOC was in 2003, it was not effective against al Qaida.

Although the book aims at demonstrating universally applicable concepts for contemporary organizations, McChrystal's argument is especially relevant to military professionals. His real-world findings are derived from leading a military unit in a conflict that remains active today. He and his staff learned to make the necessary changes to "build the aircraft in flight" and meet the challenge presented by AQI. The types of challenges that AQI presented in the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom are becoming more familiar to the U.S. military. These adaptable, networked enemies are growing more ubiquitous and cannot be defeated by an organization that operates on outdated concepts.

Team of Teams does not advocate that these challenges are special circumstances that can only be dealt with by special units. They are challenges that require cooperation and information sharing among a wide assortment of units that can bring different perspectives and capabilities to the fight. The universal

applicability of McChrystal's concepts supports the need for all military organizations to recognize the value of interaction and networking. Large, networked organizations can reach a common end state when subordinate elements abandon the urge to operate within their own, isolated silos. A comparison of McChrystal's concepts with those in ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (May 2012), reveals that the U.S. Army already has the doctrinal framework to apply his recommended changes. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Commander GEN David G. Perkins and his staff are no strangers to organizational design theory and have already provided the U.S. Army with a plan for implementing the types of changes that McChrystal recommends.

In Silicon Valley, leading corporations are grasping for the kind of improved adaptability that McChrystal integrated into JSOC. Not by coincidence, McChrystal and his new company, the McChrystal Group, offer to implement these structural changes. That McChrystal is marketing a service to the business world through his book does not detract from the lessons learned from a counterterrorism expert of exceptional accomplishment. McChrystal is convincing in his assertion that there is a major shift in the global environment, and some organizations are already structured to deal with it while some are not. The effectiveness of each of his proposed solutions is debatable, yet he provides sufficient evidence to show that they are relevant to operating in a complex environment and that change is necessary.

While this book is valuable to anyone looking to improve a large organization, it is not essential reading for the tactical leader. *Team of Teams* is more useful for a military professional assigned to operational-level headquarters. Any officer or NCO joining a major command would benefit from the ideas this book provides.